121. A method of establishing an end-to-end business-to-business commerce system for the sale, or sale and service, of product items, using a Web-enabled relational database management system running on a server platform, the method comprising the steps of:

for at least one business partner, storing business data within the database; and

enabling [the] a full spectrum of business functions to be performed remotely via the Web, the full spectrum of business function including at least electronic commerce functions, order processing functions, accounting, shipping, and customer returns.

Please add new Claim 124 as follow:

-- 124. The method of Claim 113, wherein there are sequentially interacting flows between business functions enabled by the database and wherein the business rules affect the sequentially interacting flows. --

REMARKS

The Abstract is objected to for being too long. The Abstract has been amended to greatly reduce its length.

Claims 82 and 121 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112. In claim 82 the Examiner states it is unclear whether a method or system is claimed. A formal change to claim 82 has been made to make it clear that claim 82 is a method claim. Claim 121 has been changed to make it clear that business data is stored in the database. Claim 121 has also been changed to refer to "a full spectrum" rather than "the full spectrum" in order to provide antecedent basis.

Claim 121 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the publication entitled "Business to Business on the Internet: Using the Web to Cut Costs and Build Sales." The Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

The article entitled "Business to Business on the Internet: Using the Web to Cut Costs and Build Sales" describes business-to-business electronic commerce systems. The "Business to Business on the Internet" article does not describe using a full spectrum of business functions. Like all prior systems, the "Business to Business on the Internet"

article describes a system in which a relatively narrow range of business functions are implemented using a database. Claim 121 has been amended to state that the full spectrum of business functions includes at least electronic commerce functions, order processing functions, accounting, shipping, and customer returns. Implementing all of these functions using the database allows for the data in the database to enable the operation of each of the business functions. Typically, in the past, these business functions have been isolated in their own legacy systems. To correct the legacy systems, middleware systems are used. However, the middleware only creates point-to-point links. Using a database system associated with full spectrum of business functions allows information from different business functions to be easily accessible to the other business functions. For example, accounting information can be available for use at the order processing functions so as to enable the ability to prevent orders being taken from an account that is very overdue to complete fulfilment of demand profitably. Additionally, actions in one business domain can easily trigger actions in separate business domains through the database. Note that the "Business to Business on the Internet" describes a typical prior system which uses legacy systems for the different functions and only implements a narrow range of business functions on a single database. For the above-discussed reasons, claim 121 is believed to be allowable.

Claim 113 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sitarski U.S. Patent 5,237,497. The Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Sitarski describes a system for managing flow processes. Examples described within the system include a manufacturing operation in which resources are required to transform a material or a series of transformations are done. Displays are in the forms of lines, bars, and arcs connecting rectangles, circles and geometric figures of other icons. A database is used to contain information about the flow of processes to be managed including the processes, resources and commodity flows and graphically display anticipated or actual flow processes to be managed spatially or temporally.

Claim 113 has been amended to now state that it stores the records required to form a full spectrum of business functions throughout a life cycle of a product. The full spectrum of the business functions including at least electronic commerce functions, order processing

functions, accounting, shipping, and customer returns. Claim 113 also has been amended to include the step of storing in the database different business rules for dealing with different business partners, the business rules including rules concerning more than one of the business functions. The phrase "limiting a number of business partners for which the current records are stored within a database" has been canceled from the claim.

Sitarski does not disclose, suggest, or give a motivation for a system for dealing with a full spectrum of business functions throughout the life cycle of a product or service item, the full spectrum being defined as including at least electronic commerce functions, order processing functions, accounting, shipping, and customer returns.

Additionally, claim 113 relates to a business-to-business commerce system, and the system of Sitarski relates to a flow processing system such as the steps involved in creating an item. The system of Sitarski does not anticipate or suggest or give a motivation for implementing functions as claimed in claim 113 as amended. Additionally, the storing of customized business rules dealing with different business partners is not described or suggested in Sitarski. For the above-discussed reasons, claim 113 is believed to be allowable and such is respectfully requested.

New Claim 124 has been added that is dependent on claim 113 and for that reason is believed to be allowable.

Claims 95-99 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Junger. The Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Junger describes a system for the return of a product. A consumer buys the product from a store. If the customer is unsatisfied with the unit, the customer returns the unit to the store. The store can then get on the computer network to prepare a return of the product based upon the serial number of the unit. Note that it is not suggested in the Junger reference that the customer can access a web page that allows for a customer service return record to be created in a database. Junger describes systems in which the merchant, rather than the customer, does the return.

Additionally, the system of Junger does not suggest that the customer service return record is based upon customer sales record within the database. In the present invention, the system can store a sales record which indicates the sale of the device to the customer.

When the customer accesses the system to create a customer service return record, there is some level of assurance that there is an actual item to be returned. The system of Junger does not disclose, suggest, or give motivation for such a system.

For the above-discussed reasons, claim 95 is believed to be allowable. Claim 96 has been canceled without prejudice. Claims 98 and 99 are dependent upon claim 95 and for that reason are believed to be allowable.

There is an indication on the Office action summary that claim 97 is objected to. For this reason, claim 97 has been written in independent claim including the limitations of all the claims 96 and 99. For this reason, claim 97 is believed to be allowable.

Claim 110-112 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Nichtberger U.S. Patent 4,882,675 in view of Cupps et al. U.S. Patent 5,991,739. The Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection of claim 110-112. Nichtberger describes a coupon system and particularly a paperless system for distributing and redeeming merchandising coupons. Cupps describes an Internet online ordering method and apparatus. The system of Cupps is a typical B-to-C Internet electronic commerce system.

Claim 110 describes the steps of receiving demand information from multiple sources, grouping demand information received from multiple sources, retaining a distinct record of the demand information, performing one material management processing step using the grouped demand information, and performing another processing step using the individual demand information. Describing the processing step as a material management processing step makes it clear how the system of claim 110 groups together demand information. For example, if multiple demands in the system require a physical item to be obtained, these demands can be grouped together to produce a single order in a material management step. For example, in one embodiment, after a given time period or number of orders received, the system can automatically combine together the orders. This single order reduces the ordering costs as well as potentially allows for bulk discounts on the order. Additional processing steps are used for the individual demand information. These additional processing steps can include taking the materials when they are received and processing them according to the individual demands.

None of the prior cited references suggests grouping together multiple demands into a single material management processing step. For this reason, claim 110 and dependent claims 111-112 are believed to be allowable.

Claim 96-99 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Junger U.S. Patent 6,085,172 in view of Sellers U.S. Patent 5,311,438. The Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Claims 98-99 are believed to be allowable because they are dependent upon claim 95. Claim 99 has been canceled without prejudice. Claim 97 is believed to be allowable because it is believed that claim 97 is merely objected to and claim 97 has been written in independent claim form including all the limitations of the parent claim.

Claim 82-91 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over Sellers U.S. Patent 5,311,438 in view of Cupps U.S. Patent 5,991,739. The Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Sellers describes an integrated manufacturing system. The Sellers reference describes a system of integrating a manufacturing system. Sellers describes the use of a blanket purchase order. The blanket purchase order is an agreement to purchase material over a fixed time period or fixed amount with a vendor. The materials are released as needed by the purchaser without requiring a new purchase order. Cupps et al. describes a B-to-C Internet system.

Claim 82 describes a system in which a first product is selected from an electronic catalog. An identification of the first product is stored in the first product collection. Note that the first product collection is separate from the electronic catalog. The web user, during a subsequent session, causes the first product collection to be retrieved. The web user producing an order for an item will group the item in the first product collection using the first product collection.

Claim 82 has been modified to make it clear that it relates to an electronic commerce system in which an electronic catalog is used. Creation of a product collection out of the electronic catalog is an advantage for the user that allows the user to select items for order from a smaller subset of items (the product collection). By bringing back up the first

product collection, the user can then order from the product collection without having to order through the full electronic catalog itself.

Such a method is not suggested or disclosed in any of the cited references. Col. 70, lines 30-37 of Sellers, describes a blanket purchase order maintenance. The blanket purchase orders are a formal agreement with the vendor to provide a specified quantity of material at agreed-upon prices over a specified period of time. During the period portions of the total quantity are ordered as needed. Such a system is quite different from a business-to-business electronic commerce system. There is no suggestion in Sellers of having an electronic catalog from which a first product collection is suggested. Claim 82 has also been changed to make it clear that the order is selected from the first product collection. The blanket purchase orders of Sellers cannot be considered to be first product collections from which orders are selected. For the above-discussed reasons, claim 82 is believed to be allowable. Claim 83-90 are believed to be allowable because they are dependent upon claim 82.

Claim 91 reads as follows:

91.   In a Web-based business-to-business electronic commerce system including a database and a Web server, a method comprising the steps of:

creating within the database item collections, each item being a potential subject of a business-to-business transaction; and

users creating new item collections at least partially derived from existing item collections, producing a multiplicity of item collections related by derivation

wherein the item collections are used to electronically communicate at least one of supply and demand information from a first business to a second different business.

Sellers does not disclose or suggest the system of claim 91. The Examiner states that it would be obvious to a person skilled in the art at the time the invention was made to have included item collections related by derivation because modification would save time by allowing the newly item collection to maintain the same characteristics as the item collections that it is derived from. The Applicant respectfully believes that this is not correct. Although systems such as that claimed in claim 91 are now currently quite

common, such systems were not created before the present invention. Only through hindsight reconstruction can prior systems be combined to produce the present invention. At the time the invention was invented, such a combination as suggested by the Examiner would not have been obvious.

For this reason claim 91 is believed to be allowable and such is respectfully requested. Claims 92 and 94 are dependent upon claim 91 and for that reason are believed to be allowable.

Claims 109 and 119-120 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Junger in view of Cupps and further in view of the article by Clemons entitled "Segmentation, differentiation and flexible pricing: Experience with information technology and segment-tailored strategies." The Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Junger describes a product return system. Cupps describes a B-to-C Internet commerce application. Clemons describes market segmentation techniques.

Claim 109 reads as follows:

> 109. A method of handling customer requests over a global computer network, comprising the steps of:
>
> receiving from a customer via a global computer network a post-sale customer request related to a previously-sold item;
>
> evaluating the request based on customer-specific criteria; and
>
> if the applicable criteria are met, automatically approving the request and electronically communicating approval to the customer.

As described below, Junger describes a system in which a merchant interacts with a producer of a product. Junger does not describe a system in which a customer makes a post-sale request based upon a previously-sold item. It is not suggested in Junger that a customer could make such a post-sale request wherein the system automatically approves the request if criteria are met. As mentioned by the Examiner, it is quite advantageous to avoid the intermediaries and have the customer himself make the request. There is no suggestion of this in the Junger reference however.
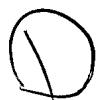
Additionally, claim 109 states that <u>customer-specific</u> criteria are used. It is not obvious to use such customer-specific criteria. No reference discloses, suggests or gives a motivation for <u>customer-specific</u> criteria. Note that Clemons does not suggest client-specific criteria for request approval, but only discusses market segmentation. Market segmentation is the process of obtaining desirble customers from a specific group, such as teachers for credit cards.

For the above reasons, claim 109 is believed to be allowable. Claims 119-120 are dependent upon claim 109 and for that reason are believed to be allowable.

Claims 100-105, 107-108, 114-118 and 122-123 are allowed. It is believed that claim 97 has been merely objected to.

Claims 82-95 and 97-124 remain in the present application. For the above-discussed reasons, these claims are believed to be allowable and such is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

Burns, Doane, Swecker & Mathis, L.L.P.

By:_____

P.O. Box 1404
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1404
(650) 622-2300

Joseph P. O'Malley
Registration No. 36,228

Date: September 15, 2000